

WORLD WAR II



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United Press Int.; Wide World

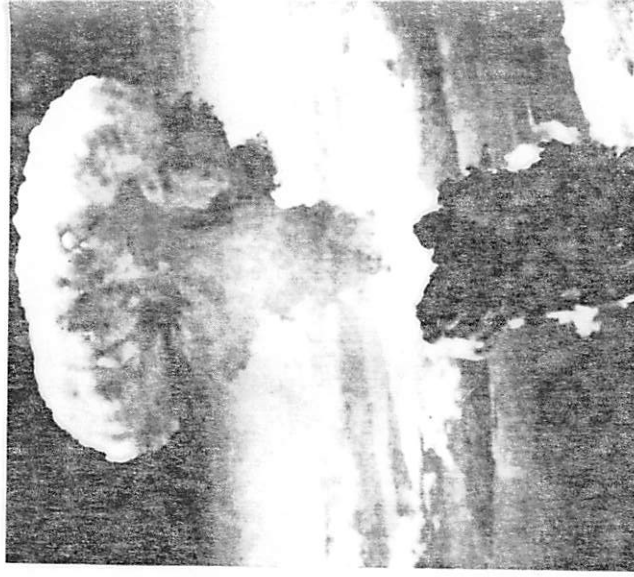
WORLD WAR II killed more persons, cost more money, damaged more property, affected more people, and probably caused more far-reaching changes than any other war in history. It opened the atomic age, and brought sweeping changes in warfare. Trucks sped infantrymen to the battle front after aerial bombing, giant tanks, and pinpoint artillery had "softened" the enemy. Bombers and ballistic missiles rained death and destruction on soldiers, sailors, and civilians alike. Airplanes, warships, and ground forces worked together with split-second timing in amphibious attacks. Paratroops dropped from airplanes or landed in gliders.

The number of people killed, wounded, or missing between September, 1939, and September, 1945, can never be calculated. More than 10 million Allied servicemen and nearly 6 million military men from the Axis countries died in the war. World War II cost more than \$1,150,000,000,000. More than 50 countries took part in the war, and the whole world felt its effects.

Men fought in almost every part of the world. The chief battlegrounds included Asia, Europe, North Africa, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and the Mediterranean Sea.

On Sept. 1, 1939, Germany attacked Poland. After this successful test of its *blitzkrieg* (lightning war) methods, the German war machine crushed six countries—Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, and France—in three months in 1940. Adolf Hitler, the dictator of Germany, failed in his attempts to knock

out Great Britain by bombing and submarine blockades. In 1941, Hitler's armies conquered Yugoslavia and Greece—which Italy had attacked after entering the war against France in 1940—and then marched into Russia. Japan's plans for expansion in the Far East led it to



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War Ended on Sept. 2, 1945, less than a month after the Allies dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

Theodore Ropp, the contributor of this article, is Professor of History at Duke University and author of War in the Modern World. The article was reviewed by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and General Carl Spaatz.



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After the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, bringing the United States into the war. After a series of disasters, the Allies took the offensive. They halted Axis advances at El Alamein in North Africa, off Midway Island in the Pacific, and at Stalingrad (now Volgograd) in Russia. Amphibious invasions of Pacific islands brought the Allies to Japan's doorstep. In Europe, Allied armies landed in Italy and France, then swept into Germany. Italy surrendered on Sept. 3, 1943, Germany on May 7, 1945, and Japan on Sept. 2, 1945. An uneasy peace, more like a cease-fire, returned to a war-weary world.

The Allies called the conflict *a war for survival*. Even before the guns were stilled, new threats to world peace arose. Russia sought to impose Communist dictatorships and stir up revolutions throughout the world. The atomic bomb and the ballistic missile served notice that any future world war would be even more destructive than World War II.

Causes of Conflict

The three main causes of World War II were: (1) the problems left unsolved by World War I, (2) the rise of dictatorships, and (3) the desire of Germany, Italy, and Japan for more territory.

Historians do not agree on the exact date when World War II began. Many consider the German invasion of Poland on Sept. 1, 1939, as the beginning of the war. Some say that it started when the Japanese invaded Manchuria on Sept. 18, 1931. Others even regard World Wars I and II as parts of the same conflict, with only a breathing spell between.

The world did not enjoy total peace from 1918 to 1939. Acts of aggression and "little wars" flared during this period, and dictators seized power in Russia, Italy, Germany, and other countries.

Problems Left by World War I

The Versailles Treaty. Many historians trace the roots of World War II to the Treaty of Versailles and

The Allies

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Czechoslovakia (Dec. 16, 1941)	Panama (Dec. 7, 1941)
Dominican Republic (Dec. 8, 1941)	Paraguay (Feb. 7, 1945)
Ecuador (Feb. 2, 1945)	Peru (Feb. 12, 1945)
Egypt (Feb. 24, 1945)	Poland (Sept. 1, 1939)
El Salvador (Dec. 8, 1941)	Russia (June 22, 1941)
Ethiopia (Dec. 14, 1942)	San Marino (Sept. 21, 1944)
France (Sept. 3, 1939)	Saudi Arabia (Mar. 1, 1945)
Great Britain (Sept. 3, 1939)	South Africa (Sept. 6, 1939)
Greece (Oct. 28, 1940)	Syria (June 8, 1941)
Guatemala (Dec. 9, 1941)	Turkey (Feb. 23, 1945)
Haiti (Dec. 8, 1941)	United States (Dec. 8, 1941)
Honduras (Dec. 8, 1941)	Uruguay (Feb. 15, 1945)
India (Sept. 3, 1939)	Venezuela (Feb. 15, 1945)
	Yugoslavia (Apr. 6, 1941)

The Axis

Albania (June 15, 1940)	Italy (June 11, 1940)
Bulgaria (Mar. 1, 1941)	Japan (Dec. 7, 1941)
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Germany (Sept. 1, 1939)	Thailand (Jan. 25, 1942)
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Dates are those on which each country entered the war.

other peace settlements that followed World War I. The Allies occupied part of Germany. They forced it to disarm, give up land, pay reparations, and admit its guilt in starting the war (see VERSAILLES, TREATY OF). Germany suffered from widespread unemployment, runaway currency inflation, and food and raw materials shortages caused by the Allied blockade. The Germans

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WAR IN EUROPE AND AFRICA

1939

- Sept. 1 German troops invaded Poland.
- Sept. 3 Britain and France declared war on Germany.
- Nov. 30 Russian troops invaded Finland.

1940

- Apr. 9 Germany attacked Denmark and Norway.
- May 10 Germany invaded Belgium, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands.
- June 10 Italy declared war on Britain and France.
- June 22 France surrendered to Germany.
- Aug. 4 Italy invaded British Somaliland.
- Oct. 28 Italy attacked Greece.
- Nov. 20 Hungary joined the Axis.
- Nov. 23 Romania joined the Axis.

1941

- Jan. 15 British soldiers invaded Ethiopia.
- Mar. 1 Bulgaria joined the Axis.
- Apr. 6 Germany invaded Greece and Yugoslavia.
- June 22 Axis forces invaded Russia.
- July 7 United States troops landed in Iceland.
- Aug. 14 The Atlantic Charter was announced.
- Dec. 11 Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. The United States declared war on Germany and Italy.

1942

- June 5 The United States declared war on Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania.
- June 21 German troops seized Tobruk in North Africa.
- July 2 The British halted the Germans at El Alamein.
- Sept. 16 German forces entered Stalingrad (now Volgograd) in Russia.
- Oct. 23 The British began an offensive at El Alamein.
- Nov. 7-8 Allied forces landed in North Africa.
- Nov. 11 French resistance in North Africa ended.
- Nov. 12 British troops captured Tobruk.
- Nov. 19 The Russians counterattacked at Stalingrad.
- Nov. 27 The French scuttled their fleet at Toulon.

1943

- Jan. 31 Field Marshal Friedrich von Paulus surrendered to the Russians.
- May 7 Tunis and Bizerte fell to the Allies.
- May 12 Organized Axis resistance in Africa ended.
- July 10 Allied forces invaded Sicily.
- Sept. 3 The Allies landed in Italy.
- Sept. 3 Italy signed a secret armistice with the Allies.
- Oct. 13 Italy declared war on Germany.
- Nov. 6 The Russians recaptured Kiev.

1944

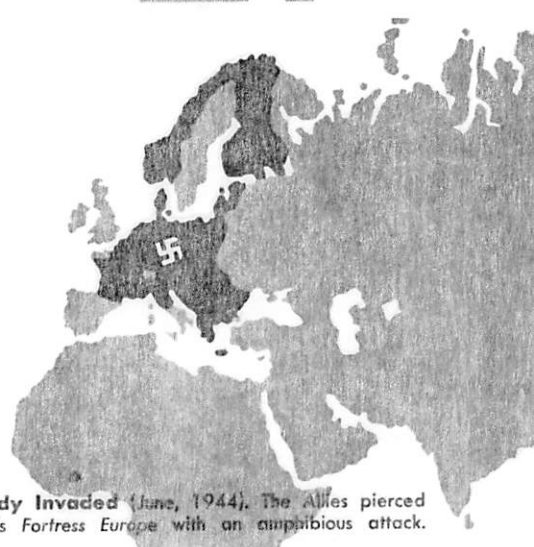
- Jan. 27 The Russians broke the siege of Leningrad.
- Mar. 19 German troops swept into Hungary.
- June 6 The Allies landed in Normandy, France.
- June 13 The first V-1 guided missile fell on London.
- July 25 United States forces broke out of Normandy.
- Aug. 15 Allied troops landed in southern France.
- Aug. 25 Romania declared war on Germany.
- Sept. 9 Bulgaria declared war on Germany.
- Sept. 10 Finland signed an armistice with Russia.
- Dec. 16 The Germans began the Battle of the Bulge.
- Dec. 27 The Allies halted the German offensive.

1945

- Jan. 11 Russian soldiers entered Warsaw, Poland.
- Jan. 21 Hungary declared war on Germany.
- Feb. 13 Russian forces occupied Budapest.
- Apr. 13 Vienna fell to invading Russian troops.
- Apr. 22 The Russians reached the suburbs of Berlin.
- Apr. 25 U.S. and Russian forces met at Torgau.
- May 2 German troops in Italy surrendered.
- May 2 Berlin surrendered to Russian troops.
- May 7 Germany surrendered to the Allies.
- July 26 The Allies issued the Potsdam Declaration.



Axis Empire at Its Height (November, 1942) extended from Norway to North Africa and France to western Russia.



Normandy Invaded (June, 1944). The Allies pierced Germany's Fortress Europe with an amphibious attack.

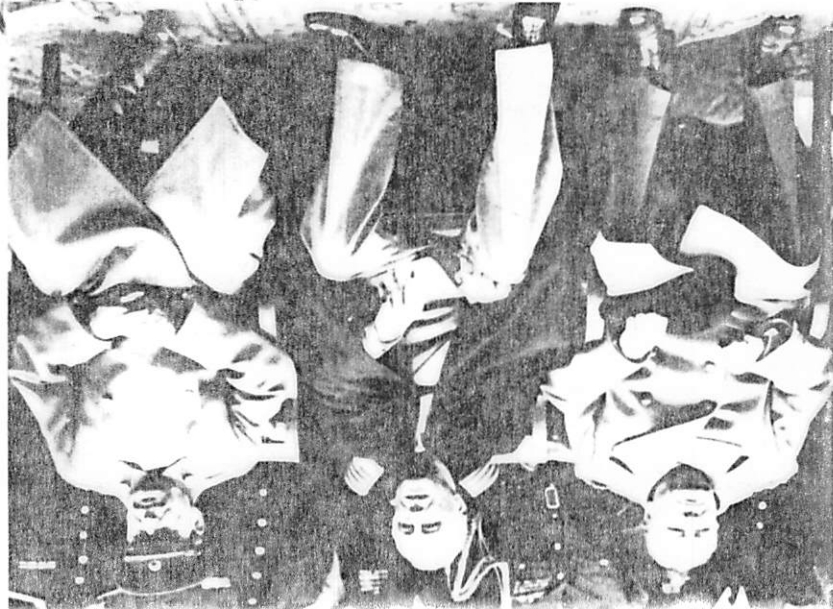


Surrender of Germany (May, 1945) ended fighting in Europe. The Allies then freed German-held Norway.

WAR LEADERS

Allied "Big Three" were Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States, and Joseph Stalin.

Axis Leaders Adolf Hitler of Germany and Benito Mussolini officially failed to win their dream of a great world empire.



render, but failed. German armies then invaded Russia.

Blitzkrieg

Poland Crushed. The German high command planned the Polish campaign with great care. It pioneered a new method of warfare called *blitzkrieg*, or lightning war. On Sept. 1, 1939, German *Stuka* dive bombers struck at fortified Polish troops, and heavier bombers struck at fortifications and industrial plants. On the ground, tanks and infantry raced through the Polish lines. The British and French could not give direct help to the Poles.

In August, Germany and Russia had agreed secretly to divide Poland. On September 17, with the Polish armies ready to collapse, Russian armies invaded eastern Poland against little opposition. The Russians claimed that they wanted to "protect their own frontiers." Most Polish resistance ended within three days.

ward. Allied armies would crush Germany against the Russian forces rolling westward. The Allies planned to knock Italy out of the war by invading it from North African bases.

In order to defeat Japan, the Allies planned to seize the Pacific islands and to build bomber bases in China.

When war began in 1939, Germany had the advantage of being substantially mobilized. It had already organized its industrial plants for wartime needs. The Allies, after war broke out, had to draft and train men for the armed forces, transform factories and plants for war production, and adopt strategic plans.

Hitler had a well-balanced *wehrmacht*, or armed force, of 100 combat divisions, with powerful tanks, motorized vehicles, and heavy artillery. Great Britain, France, and Poland had greater reserves of manpower. But their armies were not so well trained and equipped as those of the Germans. Germany had about 12,000 military aircraft, compared to about 8,000 for the Allies. The Allies had larger navies, with about five tons of ships to every one for the Germans. But the Allies also had to patrol wide areas of the world, and Germany could restrict its fleet activities to the North Sea and the nearby Atlantic.

In addition, German submarines seriously threatened Allied vessels carrying troops and war materials.

From the time Germany attacked Poland until Japan surrendered six years later, the Axis mobilized about 30,000,000 men and women in their armed forces. The Allies mobilized about 62,000,000 men and women.

Early Stages of the War

The overwhelming power of the Axis won a series of major conquests during the first two years of war. In turn, Poland, Denmark, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia, and Greece fell before the Axis war machine. Germany gained active allies in Italy, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The Germans tried to bomb Britain into sur-

1931

Sept. 18 Japan invaded Manchuria in North China.

1937

July 7 Japan invaded China.

1940

Sept. 22 Japan pushed into French Indochina.

1941

Apr. 13 Japan and Russia signed a non-aggression pact.

June 8 British and French troops invaded Syria.

Aug. 25 Russian and British forces invaded Iran.

Dec. 7 The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

Dec. 8 The United States declared war on Japan.

Dec. 9 China declared war on Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Dec. 10 Guam surrendered to the Japanese.

Dec. 23 Wake Island surrendered to the Japanese.

Dec. 25 British troops at Hong Kong surrendered.

1942

Jan. 2 Manila fell to invading Japanese forces.

Jan. 11 The Japanese landed in the Netherlands East Indies.

Feb. 1 U.S. ships raided the Marshalls and Gilberts.

Feb. 15 Singapore surrendered to the Japanese.

Feb. 27 The Allies lost the Battle of Java Sea.

Mar. 7 The Japanese occupied the Netherlands East Indies.

April 9 Bataan surrendered to the Japanese.

Apr. 18 U.S. carrier-based aircraft bombed Tokyo.

May 4-8 The Allies won the Battle of the Coral Sea.

May 6 The Japanese occupied Corregidor.

June 4-6 The Battle of Midway ended Japan's expansion eastward.

Aug. 7 U.S. marines landed on Guadalcanal.

1943

Mar. 2-5 The Allies defeated a Japanese naval force in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea.

Mar. 13 Japanese troops retreated across the Yangtze.

May 30 Organized Japanese resistance on Attu ended.

Oct. 2 Allied forces captured Finschhafen.

Nov. 1 U.S. troops landed on Bougainville Island.

Nov. 20 U.S. marines invaded Tarawa and Makin.

Nov. 22 The Allies conferred at Cairo in Egypt.

1944

Jan. 31 U.S. troops attacked Kwajalein atoll.

Feb. 17 U.S. naval forces raided Truk Island.

Feb. 29 Allied soldiers landed in the Admiralties.

Mar. 22 Japanese troops crossed the border of India.

Apr. 22 Allied forces landed at Hollandia.

June 15 U.S. marines invaded Saipan Island.

June 15 B-29 Superfortresses raided Japan.

June 19-20 U.S. forces won the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

July 21 U.S. troops landed on Guam Island.

Sept. 15 U.S. marines invaded Peleliu Island.

Oct. 20 U.S. Army forces landed on Leyte.

Oct. 23-26 The U.S. Pacific Fleet crushed the Japanese fleet in the Battle for Leyte Gulf.

1945

Jan. 9 Allied troops invaded Luzon, Philippines.

Jan. 22 The Allies reopened a land route to China.

Feb. 19 U.S. marines stormed Iwo Jima Island.

Apr. 1 U.S. troops landed on Okinawa Island.

Aug. 6 U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Aug. 9 U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

Aug. 10 Japan opened peace negotiations.

Aug. 14 Japan accepted the Allied surrender terms.

Sept. 2 Japan signed the terms of surrender.

Sept. 8 Japanese forces in China surrendered.

Sept. 12 Japanese troops in Southeast Asia surrendered.

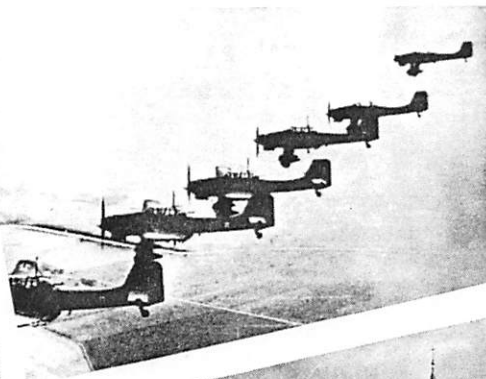
Pearl Harbor Attacked (December, 1941). Japan's conquests included Indochina, Manchuria, and parts of China.

Japan's Empire at Its Height (August, 1942) stretched from the Netherlands East Indies to parts of the Aleutians.

Surrender (August, 1945). When Japan surrendered, ending World War II, it still occupied parts of eastern Asia.

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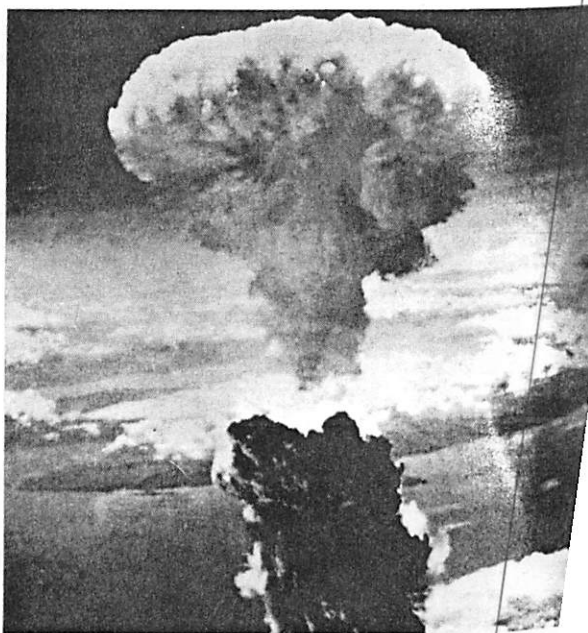
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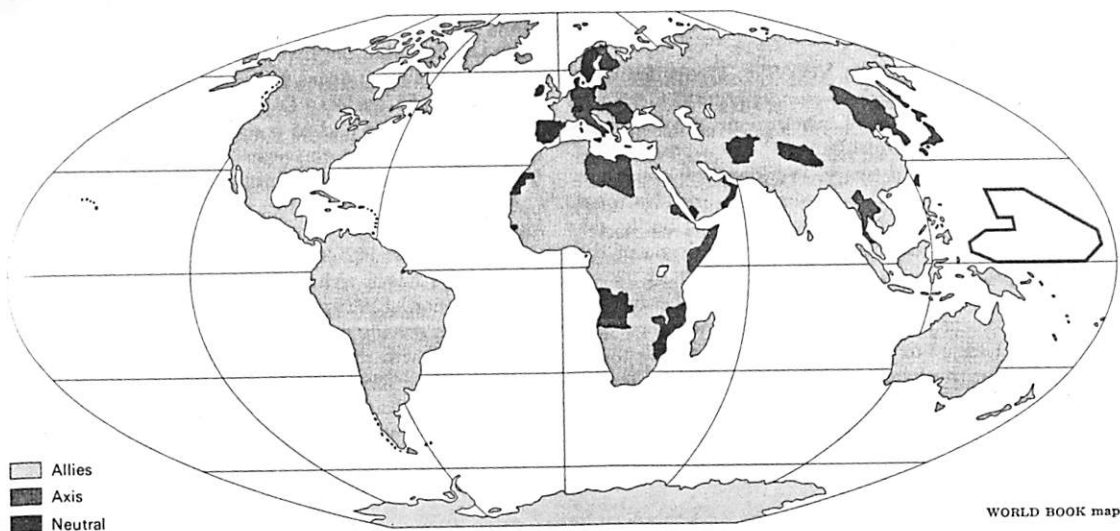
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EUROPEAN THEATER

ATLANTIC OCEAN



Battle of the Atlantic
Sept., 1939-May, 1945

